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CHINA PAINTING—I.

By MRS. N. R.
MONACHESI.

CHINA painting has earned for itself such a secure footing that it is now almost included in the curriculum of a liberal education. At first there were but a few outside of a factory who ventured to paint on china with mineral colors, and these few were generally confined to those who had had the advantages of study abroad and to the ambitious ones who had

faith in themselves and their efforts. By degrees others "tried their hand at it," and then it seemed as if suddenly it sprang into popular favor and swept through the land as a fashionable fad or fancy. Ever since then china painting has been on the crest of the wave among the favorite occupations of the rich, the poor, the young, the old. The idle enjoyed it and the busiest found time to indulge in it. Then began serious efforts at improvement. Professionals were impounded for lessons; books were written on the subject giving technical details and instructions; dealers took it up; colors were prepared ready for the amateur's use; the demand for undecorated china increased, and new and fascinating shapes were constantly being placed on the market that were simply irresistible; gradually the ornamental succeeded utility, and it was no longer table ware, plates and cups and saucers, until to-day there is scarcely anything that cannot be had in china. Nor did improvement cease here. Inventors recognized this charming art had come to stay, and as the amateurs progressed and were not satisfied to have someone else finish their work by gilding and firing, kilns were next supplied, then gold and silver and various-colored bronzes, raised paste enamels, jewels, cameos; in fact the American girl never ceased clamoring until she obtained every necessary accessory. Then artists and decorators "took a hand" at it and supplied designs; societies of china painters were formed, competitive exhibitions were given, prizes offered, and to-day it has assumed an almost national importance.

China painting is contagious, and if once caught its attack generally proves serious. It is by no means a cheap pastime; on the contrary, it is somewhat expensive, partaking the nature of both luxury and necessity. China, brushes, colors, gold, firing, etc., must be estimated in the cost; and if lessons are included, and the price of designs, it adds very materially to the sum total.

There are many who are debarred from engaging in this interesting pursuit simply for lack of means—this may be financial or the advantages of any instruction. It is to this class principally that we appeal, and intend to help, by a series of instructive papers that may enable anyone to begin and continue to paint china.

We will presuppose those we now address know nothing at all of this art—or in fact of any other branch of art. It is quite true that with the facilities offered to the amateur to-day

no previous art education is necessary to produce some very acceptably-decorated china. No previous preparation is at all necessary—no toiling years spent in learning to draw—for the amateur can trace her design and readily transfer it to the china. No study of perspective is required, as china painting is mainly decorative and not pictorial. No understanding of light and shade, half lights, reflected or transmitted lights, shadows and cast shadows, because your design, especially if a colored study, gives all these and you merely copy the result of someone else's study and experience.

Of course this method precludes all possibility of originality and renders copying someone else's ideas more or less of a necessity, but as it is universally done, even by those who have had educational advantages in art training, no one need be deterred from doing the same thing once more. Besides, there is real merit in being able to copy well and accurately. It requires great care and the natural ability to be able to see correctly. This quality of seeing, too, requires training, and it is remarkable how much more a cultivated eye can see than one unaccustomed to exercise this function. By degrees, perhaps, you will grow used to observing, and then the next step will be to put it to some practical purpose. Make at least an effort to sketch some simple little flower—an effort, even though at first unsuccessful, is a considerable step in the right direction and way ahead of no effort at all—and thus little by little you will gain courage and confidence, till it ceases to be any effort.

But until you can do this with some skill you had better confine yourself to good studies that are provided for just such as you. In our pages there will be from time to time various designs that will be of use. In the meanwhile do not hesitate to make an attempt, which may be done at a very modest outlay of money and time, and if you do not feel encouraged to continue then we are very much mistaken.

We will take you through several successive stages of progress, gradually imparting some knowledge relative to the art and its technical details, and try and make it easy by removing all the difficulties that beset the path of the beginner.

Remember our columns are open to you, and we will gladly, willingly, answer any questions you may choose to ask. We bring to this department the theoretical and practical knowledge and experience of many years, which we think can be turned over for your benefit.

To the person who entertains doubts as to the ultimate success of the undertaking, we would advise making the experiment on as small an outlay for materials as possible. It is useless to purchase a full complement of materials without having in view a very definite determination to continue. Therefore, to the beginner we would suggest very few colors, or better still, one, and work out some design in monochrome. These are always pleasing, and many very beautiful results are due to one color when handled skillfully.

This method will afford you some insight into the manipulation of both color and brushes beside having the additional advantage, if the attempt is an utter failure, of feeling your experience did not cost much. Do not hesitate to try with one color on the idea that it betrays your ignorance and inexperience, that it at once pronounces you to be the tyro you are. It is not the fact that you work in one color, but the amount of skill bestowed, that emphasizes your proficiency. If one color is selected deep red brown is good, and is as its name indicates a deep rich red tint, with but little brown. If this is too pronounced in tone, violet of iron is beautiful, somewhat lower than deep red brown and much softer and rather grayer. It requires a much harder fire than the first mentioned.

If a blue is preferred procure a color called deep blue green, which, however, is not green at all, but the most perfect shade of blue in the whole list of colors. It is the same that forget-me-nots are painted with and also skies. It is equally beautiful when used delicately and in pale tints or its full strength.

Another blue is an old blue or delft blue, now much the fashion. Its color approximates that of the delft ware of Holland and the always admired Dutch tiles.

Either of these will produce beautiful results; the selection is altogether a matter of individual taste or fancy, whether you prefer a soft, somewhat pale blue, a perfect blue, or the deeper shade. If, however, your desire is to try something in natural colors, select the spray of flowers first and obtain only the necessary colors to reproduce it. As you advance the rest of the colors required to make a full palette may be added from time to time, and the expense is apparently lightened. Perhaps

exclusively for those who can abundantly afford it. It is our purpose in giving these free instructions to enable others to engage in it, and thereby lighten expenses one degree at least.

If our directions are followed we intend, that if the reader cannot ultimately procure more than reimbursement of all expenditure, at least she will have some knowledge of a pursuit that will give her infinite pleasure and her friends enduring enjoyment.

In the selection of colors we would advise the purchaser to buy only of a reputable merchant, whose business it is to prepare artists' materials. There are many preparations in the market that are equally good, one as the other. Mineral colors are manufactured in England, France, Germany and America, and no one line possesses any special advantage over the other.

There may be a difference in a few colors owing to some slight variety of their respective formulas. Perhaps, too, they were each prepared with a view to fusing to the china of the land, which certainly differs widely from that of the other, both in body and glaze. For instance, English china is softer in both qualities than French. But on the whole, the difference in the colors is so slight as to be wholly unperceived by beginners.

It is not within the province of this article to enter into the relative merits of any particular make, but to avoid confusion will adhere to Lacroix's (French) colors—simply that they are to be found everywhere, and seem to be universally used.

In our April number we published an article setting forth the many advantages of Sartorius' Vitro Colors, which are mixed and used with water. If you prefer these the names hereafter given will not conflict, as they are the same. After all, the colors are manufactured from the same basis, that is the same minerals, and if one manufacturer chooses to call his color carnation, and another pompadour, what difference does it make to the beginner, except no end of confusion? It is therefore to avoid this confusion that hereafter all colors mentioned will be those on the regular Lacroix list—which have also been adopted by some other equally reputable houses.

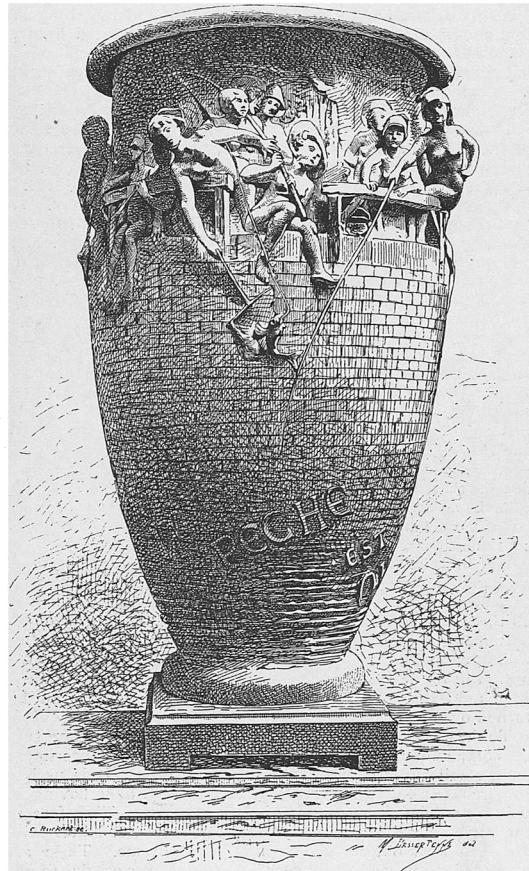
Just here should be set at rest once and forever that universal doubt, which has so erroneously attained such frightful dimensions in regard to mixing these colors. **THEY WILL ALL MIX.** The impression that they do not is firmly rooted in the minds of many. How or why this ever obtained currency is impossible to imagine. But true it is that many are afraid to venture on such prohibited ground. When questioned they can not give any good or valid reason for not mixing, but steadfastly avoid it as though it would create some dreadful catastrophe; something a little less degree dreadful than an explosion or complete annihilation—or something else too horrible to be named. The writer never could get an opinion or intelligent expression from anyone who advanced this theory, and has always found it an almost unsurmountable barrier to overcome, so steadfast do they remain to their prejudices, when inculcated by persons having no experience.

(To be continued.)

DECORATIVE NOTE.

WHITE lead paint on floors is detrimental to health, and is said to render the wood soft, and, hence, less capable of wear. Ocher is especially desirable, while zinc may be used also. Varnish made of drying lead salt is also said to be destructive to the wear; and it is recommended that the borate of manganese should be used to dry the varnish. A recipe for a good floor varnish is as follows: Take 2 lbs. of pure white borate of manganese, finely powdered, and add it, little by little, to a saucepan containing 10 lbs. of linseed oil, which is to be well stirred and raised to a temperature of 360° Fahr. Heat 100 lbs. of linseed oil in a boiler until ebullition takes place, then add to it the first liquid; increase the heat, and allow it to boil for twenty minutes. Then remove from the fire and filter the solution through cotton cloth. The varnish is then ready for use. Two coats may be used, with a final coat of shellac, if a brilliant polish is desired.

A good, smooth soft wood floor may be stained a rich dark brown by the use of 1 lb. of asphaltum mixed with $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of beeswax, or a greater quantity of each in proportion. Add more asphaltum if too light. Apply with a sponge or brush. A thin coat of shellac is then put on, lightly sandpapered off, and varnished.



VASE FOR FLOWERS. BY JOSEPH CHERET.

special stress seems unduly laid upon the very material counting of cost, but that this element enters largely into a discussion whether to paint china or not is very true and has been most thoroughly impressed upon the writer.

To many to pay five, six or eight dollars to make an experiment is a deterrent factor, while these same persons might not object, provided they could purchase them by degrees and gradually accumulate all the requisite accessions for the pursuance of this art. As this is written to encourage the art, we feel bound to allude more or less to the probable cost—and to open a way by which those of a moderate income need not be denied the privilege of painting china.

Although china painting, as we said before, is rather an expensive luxury, yet there is no reason why the art should be